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## Summarizing the Current Allegations Against Richard Carrier

June 20, 2016 | [Stephanie Zvan](#)

Skepticon has [just released a statement](#) saying that Richard Carrier will not be allowed to attend their future conferences because of inappropriate behavior. They had previously stopped inviting him to speak after he displayed a pattern of pushing a staffer's boundaries.

*In light of the recent revelations of sexual harassment, unwelcome attention, and/or unwanted behavior from more than one prominent atheist, Skepticon would like to renew our vow to keep our attendees, speakers, volunteers, vendors, organizers, and anyone else involved in Skepticon safe at our events.*

*The accusations specifically against Richard Carrier are, sadly, not so surprising to*



*the Skepticon organizers. While he was a featured speaker for many years, we stopped inviting him to speak partly because of his repeated boundary-pushing behavior, including towards someone involved in Skepticon. What has been made clear by the recent discussions is that our attendees' well being and comfort is put at an unacceptable risk by Carrier's presence, and so we are officially prohibiting Richard Carrier from attending any future Skepticons.*

In case you missed it last week, this is the third allegation of flatly unacceptable behavior from Carrier to be made public. The first [he publicized himself](#).

*At an afterparty at a pub after a sponsored event that had an event policy against making sexual advances, after having engaged in fascinating and intense conversation with a woman for hours, I badly misread her fascination with the subject as flirtatious interest in me, and I told her that I'd like to make a pass at her. She was confused and taken aback by that, was definitely not interested, and I immediately realized I'd crossed a line with her. I was worried I had made her uncomfortable. I immediately apologized. She continued on her own interest to engage me in excellent conversation for several hours more and everything turned out well, but still. I should not have said that to her.*

We now know this was a student event and the rule he was breaking was "Speakers must refrain from initiating any and all sexual behavior with students with respect to Speakers Bureau events." Nothing in this rule makes this okay if you think the student is interested in you. Nothing in this rule makes this okay if they don't run away afterward. This is true despite Carrier's mentioning both of these as though they were mitigating circumstances.

As of last week, we also have [this public accusation](#) of him violating the policy with another student. She says he hit on her and nonconsensually touched her arm and leg. There are comments from another student corroborating that these aren't new accusations. This is the accusation that the Secular Student Alliance investigated and which resulted in his removal from the SSA Speakers Bureau.



Note that if you click through, you'll see an allegation that Camp Quest allowed Carrier to work for them after knowing that the SSA took action. (The executive directors of the organizations are married.) Everyone agrees at this point that this didn't happen. However, Camp Quest did promote Carrier showing off their logo at an event more recently than this. There are also questions about whether students were given enough information to protect themselves after Carrier spoke at events at SSA affiliate groups and was allowed to volunteer at SSACon. The [SSA is conducting a board-level review](#) of their actions here and their relevant policies and procedures.

[Carrier denies this accusation](#). He says he didn't fight the SSA Speakers Bureau removal because he thought it was about the event he made public. However, in this denial, he says straight out that he told her he would be interested in dating her. I'm not sure how that's not initiating sexual behavior except in that it failed. Otherwise, it's breaking the same SSA rule as the event he previously volunteered. A student saying they're considering a poly relationship is not initiating a sexual relationship with the person they say it to. The person saying, "I'd like to date you", is. Carrier's other objections to Franks' statement are a defense of the SSA, not of his behavior.

I've spoken to a Skepticon organizer. The pattern there is similar, except that the expressions of sexual interest were repeated, though more deniably after they weren't reciprocated. I've also spoken with two other people who don't wish to come forward publicly. Both have been on the receiving end of Carrier's unwanted interest. In both cases, he met their polite deferral of his interest with more blunt expressions of interest. There are also very troubling aspects of how Carrier spoke of these people to others. I won't go into that in detail because it has the potential to identify them.

Whether I'm looking at all five of these accusations or only the three public ones, my reaction is the same. The most charitable thing I can find to say about Carrier's behavior is that he is oblivious to sexual disinterest in him and unwilling to stop initiating sexual contact despite that. I'm not inclined to that kind of charity in the face of that much problem behavior, however. I'm even less inclined to charity for someone who repeatedly breaks rules designed to protect students to behave that way. Less so yet for someone who tells us that *in a post defending himself*.

At this point, I have to conclude that Carrier is highly resistant to changing this behavior. He's received plenty of feedback. Organizations and individuals have told him that what he's done is wrong. His response is to handwave at irrelevancies. I don't know why anyone would look at his recent blog post on this and think it won't happen again the moment the opportunity presents



itself.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Stephanie Zvan is the producer of The Humanist Hour podcast. She's also one of the hosts for the Minnesota Atheists' radio show and podcast, Atheists Talk. She speaks on science and skepticism in a number of venues, including science fiction and fantasy conventions. Stephanie has been called a science blogger and a sex blogger, but if it means she has to choose just one thing to be or blog about, she's decided she's never going to grow up. In addition to science and sex and the science of sex, you'll find quite a bit of politics here, some economics, a regular short fiction feature, and the occasional bit of concentrated weird. Oh, and arguments. She sometimes indulges in those as well. But I'm sure everything will be just fine. Nothing to worry about. Nothing at all.

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